

Art

MONTHLY

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Francis Alÿs Walks
Coline Milliard

The Artist as Artist
Dean Kenning

History of Art, the
Klara Kemp-Welch

Emerging Markets
Colin Gleadell





Joanna Rajkowska
The Chariot 2010
performance

■ Estrangement

Showroom London 21 April to 5 June

On the opening day of 'Estrangement', two art-world-attired adults dressed in tasteful shades of black could be spotted towing a full-size gold-painted Roman chariot at speed along the local high street. About a dozen children stood inside the open-backed cart, clinging perilously to its sides, spilling in and out with breathless excitement. *The Chariot*, 2010, by Polish artist Joanna Rajkowska, was based on the somewhat tenuous conceit that ancient chariots, which originally came from the East and were eventually integrated into British indigenous culture (remember Boudicca?), are an obvious corollary to Edgware's immigrant population, which largely hails from the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent. The idea might have been naff, but the event was both fun and genuinely concerned with enriching the social experience of this deprived neighbourhood.

Initiated by Polish curator Aneta Szyrak and Iraqi artist Hiwa K, the Estrangement Project is an ongoing series of workshops and exhibitions regionally centred in Kurdish Iraq and spilling geographically and culturally across northern Europe. On the opening night, Hiwa K and Jim

White's untitled performance at the nearby Cockpit Theatre featured a screening of the famous dénouement gunfight from *Once Upon a Time in the West*, 1968, and was both witty and sincere. This consisted of a live musical performance of Ennio Morricone's blood-curdling soundtrack by the artist (on mouth organ) and a clutch of Royal College of Music students (on brass); also performing was White, a former US soldier who now works as a caretaker at the Art Academy of Mainz (where Hiwa K currently lives). White, who is not a musician, concentrated with grim determination as he strummed his chords, and this lack of professionalism became an integral part of the performance. The event lasted barely ten minutes or so, but it effectively dissolved the latent binary conflict of good/bad, Iraqi/American into a drama of friendship, co-operation and hard work.

Returning to the gallery the next day was a relatively sedate experience, but the humour and muddying of clichés continued apace. There was deadpan playfulness to Sherko Abbas's video *Sherwal*, 2008, which is named after the Kurdish men's trousers that tighten at the ankles and flare around the upper legs. Here, the artist inflates his sherwal into a sort of lower-body life vest, which he uses as a buoyancy device to help him swim across a small lake. Also comically off-key were Maryam Jaffri's short video works in which she performed as two interlocutors whose

Profusion

Anna Barham, Karla Black,
Marcel Broodthaers, Lucy Clout,
Clem Crosby, Jimmie Durham,
Mark Fairnington, Doug Fishbone,
Martino Gamper, Roger Hiorns,
John Plowman, Daniel Silver,
Harald Smykla, Jack Strange

Curated by Sotiris Kyriacou
and John Plowman



19 June – 11 July 2010

Calke Abbey
Ticknall
Derbyshire
DE73 7LE

www.beaconartproject.org

Opening Times: 12noon–5pm, Saturday – Wednesday



identities seemed to fuse and unravel. In *Theatre*, 2001, she acts as both patient and doctor; her ponderous, rather annoying, metrical intonation becomes a Brechtian device that opens up a gulf between experience, performance and narrative, and was the most distilled approximation of the project's 'estrangement' leitmotif.

Theatrical self-analysis was also evident in works that testified to a closer experience of the violence of war, migration and exile. In Anton Katz's *Dasha & Kolja*, 2008, the artist gave his video camera to two young street children living in a Russian village near the Estonian border, who alternately perform to the camera (practising circus juggling, clambering across a barn roof etc) and retreat shyly from its gaze. Shirwan Can and Horeb Gharib's video *Waterwell*, 2007, was filmed in a closed religious community in Kurdistan whose numbers have dwindled over the years to four elderly women, down from the original 15, owing to their doctrine of celibacy. Here, the women are shown milking a cow, making flat bread, hanging out washing and performing other everyday routines. In Knutte Wester's *Gzim back in Kosovo*, 2005, the artist traced a young refugee he had met in Sweden but whose asylum request was subsequently turned down. Back in Kosovo, Gzim (who is about 12 years old) can barely remember Swedish and freely mixes languages picked up in exile – Albanian, Swedish, German, Norwegian, English – as he strolls around the carcasses of buildings that surround his parent's remote homestead.

In Hiwa K's *Moon Calendar/Iraq*, 2007, the artist tap dances in an attempt to match the rhythm of his heart, which he monitors through a stethoscope. Filmed in the former Red Security Building in Sulaimany in Iraqi Kurdistan, where Kurdish dissidents were imprisoned and tortured during the Ba'ath Party era, there is an obvious resonance here with a subjective approach to reconciling the past, marking the passing of these horrific events with the artist's ongoing life force. The site is now a hybrid memorial, museum and gallery complex, and two other artists explore its changing fate: Sherko Abbas's *Amna Suraka*, 2008, is a reproduction of an aged black and white photograph of two men posing on a football field on which the complex would later be constructed; Husseyn Karakaya's untitled photograph from 2007 shows a room in the former prison that guards have filled with a colourful array of doves, as if their beauty and peace would dispel the old ghosts.

Hiwa K's untitled photograph of the Sha'ab Teahouse in Sulaimany shows a large room filled with men sitting



Diary Muhammad Osman
German Village 2010

engaged in hushed conversation. This was, it seems, a site of political conspiracy during the Ba'ath period where many of Kurdistan's current political factions were born. Another documentary image presented the inverse of this communicative way of life: Diary Muhammad Osman's *German Village*, 2010, an image of a modern European-style village constructed in, or near, the Kurdish capital Erbil: neat, newly built flats and rows of sparkling, high-end consumer cars that speak of sad, isolated and segmented lives. Worse, of course, is the suggestion that this compartmentalisation is the fate of Kurdistan and the Middle East in the post-Saddam, free-market era.

'Estrangement' sought to reinject the festivity of communal life into an individualistic society. The live and celebratory side of this show was, however, hard to pick up unless you happened to have seen Rajkowska's chariot in action or experienced Hiwa K and White's performance. Certainly, there was plenty of textual information – including a large single-edition publication with essays and quotes from, amongst others, Herbert Marcuse ('The theoretical concepts terminate with social change') – but there was no easily digestible information sheet grouping together these disparate elements. Without this, the ambition and scope of the project was dissipated and hard to grasp. ■

COLIN PERRY is a writer and a critic based in London.

John Hansard Gallery

Hayward Touring Curatorial Open II
29 June – 21 August 2010

GROUND LEVEL

Maria Thereza Alves | The Atlas Group | Ricardo Basbaum | Heath Bunting and Kayle Brandon | Center for Land Use Interpretation | Simon Evans | Yolande Harris | Christian Philipp Müller | Eyal Weizman | Stephen Willats
Curated by Kit Hammonds

A Hayward Touring exhibition from Southbank Centre, London.
Selected and developed in partnership with John Hansard Gallery,
Southampton; QUAD, Derby; Oriol Mostyn, Llandudno and
Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum

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Heath Bunting, Rio, Chancia Portugal, from *Bombing*,
Photograph © Heath Bunting 2001

